



# Y2K What<sup>2</sup>Do

California Governor's Office of Emergency Services

## Y2K Individual and Family Preparedness

*Includes information for people with health/medical concerns and other special considerations.*

### Background

As the year 2000 arrives at midnight December 31, 1999, thousands of computers and countless computer chips have the potential to malfunction. The problem, known as "Y2K" or the "millennium bug", arises from the fact that computer programs recognize only the last two digits in years, such as 99 for 1999. That shortcut has the potential to confuse computers and software that cannot distinguish between 1900 and 2000, causing output of incorrect data or computer system disruptions. Among the services which may suffer potential disruptions are the delivery of utilities such as electricity, water and gas; electronic financial transactions; transportation; and health care. These potential disruptions may create emergency situations that can be mitigated with some advance individual and family preparedness planning. Because it is impossible to determine at this time exactly what the impact might be, the Governor's Office of Emergency Services (OES) is encouraging California residents to prepare now for Y2K using similar steps as those used for other emergencies such as earthquakes and severe winter weather.

### Begin Preparations

People relying on home health-care providers, special medical equipment or other forms of support services have extra considerations when preparing for possible Y2K disruptions or other disasters. While some

problems may become evident immediately, others may take a little longer to have an impact. OES suggests that all households be prepared to be self-sufficient (able to live without running water, electricity and/or gas, telephone and assistance from safety devices) for three to seven days. The best place to start is by examining your needs and those of your family or your client if you are a professional caregiver/attendant. Evaluate capabilities, limitations, resources and special needs, as well as surroundings to determine what type of help you, your family or your client will need in an emergency. Try to imagine how Y2K may impact your safety and well being. How would you cook if gas and electrical service is disrupted? What appliances can your household function without for several days at a time? Do you keep enough money at home to cover immediate expenses in case ATMs do not work? How often do you shop for groceries and other supplies? Does your car have enough gas in the tank to allow you to function for days at a time without stopping to refill? What might be some special medical needs that require extra planning? If you or your client relies on special medical services, equipment, and or/supplies, have you included those needs in your preparedness planning?

Preparing takes time and effort. Do a little at a time, as your ability and budget permit. The important thing is to start preparing. The more you do, the more

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confident you will be that you can protect yourself, your family, and those who depend on your services. This guide is designed as a helpful tool to prepare for a possible emergency. Start now to create a plan!

## Suggested Preparations

### Water

Store one gallon of water per person per day (at least two quarts for drinking, two quarts for food preparation and sanitation). Store water in sound plastic containers, such as soft drink bottles. Never use a container that has held a toxic substance. Boiling water before use is the safest method of purifying water, but also have a water purification kit on hand. For the boiling method, bring water to a rolling boil for at least one (1) minute. Increase boiling time to at least three (3) minutes if you live at high elevations above 6,500 feet. *Hint:* When used for drinking, after cooling, pouring the water back and forth between two containers will help improve the taste as oxygen is added during this process. Other water sources in your home can be found in ice cubes, the toilet tank at the back of the toilet (if no chemical disinfectant is used), swimming pool, and spa. Water used from these sources must be purified before drinking, or use the water only for toilet flushing and other non-ingested purposes.

### Food

Have plenty of nonperishable food on hand for each person to survive on for three to seven days. Keep in mind any special diets for you and/or family members, including service animals and pets. Store nonperishable basics such as dry and canned goods (soups, juices, milk, vegetables, boxed food, beans, and pasta). If you experience a power failure, use perishable and refrigerated foods first and then foods from the freezer. Be sure to have a non-electric can opener and utility knife available.

### Cooking/Heating

Alternative sources for cooking and heating may be needed should Y2K cause a disruption in delivery of gas and electricity.

**Cooking:** Several alternative cooking means may already be available. Barbecues and camp stoves are

just two ideas for alternative cooking (**for outdoor use only**). If using propane, be sure the tank is full and consider having a second full tank on hand. Another idea for an alternative cooking device might be a “canned heat” stove. Remember, **safety first** when using fire as an alternative cooking source.

**Heating:** Have sleeping bags available as well as plenty of blankets and warm clothing. Make sure there is plenty of wood for wood-burning stoves and fireplaces. If using a non-electrical alternative heating device, make sure it is approved for indoor use and always follow manufacturer’s operating instructions. Ensure there is adequate ventilation to prevent build up of carbon monoxide, other gases, or smoke inside the home. **Never use barbecues or any similar outdoor cooking appliance in your home as they are a fire hazard and the fumes they create can kill you.**

### Refuse

Make sure enough sturdy covered garbage containers are available to hold two weeks’ worth of refuse should Y2K disrupt garbage collection. Tight sealing lids on garbage cans will help keep rodents and other pests away. Never burn waste in a fireplace.

### The “Buddy” System

An important part of being prepared for any disruption of services or a disaster is planning with family, friends, and neighbors. Develop a “buddy” system or personal support network, consisting of individuals who will check with you in an emergency and give assistance if needed. Do not depend on any one person. Plan how you will help each other in an emergency. If applicable, discuss your plan with your home health care provider or other essential service providers. Maintain an emergency contact list (names and telephone numbers). Include your home health care provider, doctor, hospital, medical suppliers, and pharmacy.

### Training

Training is an essential part of a good preparedness plan. Getting trained in first aid, CPR and basic disaster preparedness can save lives. Everyone in your household including care-givers, and anyone who is part of your “buddy” system should get trained in the basics, including how to deal with any special

medical equipment or concerns. People who may not be able to physically perform the tasks on their own should participate in trainings so they will be able to support or instruct others if necessary.

## Basic Supplies

You may want to store a three to seven day supply of the following:

- ✓ Paper plates, cups, plastic utensils
- ✓ Flashlights, battery operated radio and/or TV
- ✓ Battery operated security lights to light travel paths within the home
- ✓ Extra batteries
- ✓ Whistle or loud bell
- ✓ Matches (keep out of reach of children)
- ✓ Battery operated smoke alarm
- ✓ Battery operated carbon monoxide detector
- ✓ Toilet paper, towelettes
- ✓ Personal hygiene items
- ✓ Plastic garbage bags, zip-locking bags
- ✓ Waterless antibacterial hand soap
- ✓ Disinfectant/bleach
- ✓ Fire extinguisher
- ✓ Heavy gloves
- ✓ Duct tape, masking tape
- ✓ Extra eye glasses, hearing aid, canes, mobility aids, etc.
- ✓ Freshly stocked first-aid kit
- ✓ Extra blanket and warm clothing
- ✓ Cleansing agent/soap
- ✓ Antiseptic
- ✓ Non-prescription drugs you use regularly
- ✓ Full supply of prescription medication (when purchasing prescriptions after 12/31/99, check your prescription information carefully)
- ✓ List of instruction on how to operate and safely move essential equipment, how to provide essential personal services, and how to safely transport you or your client if necessary.

Review and practice your plans several times before December 31, 1999.

## Special Medical Concerns

**Emergency Bag or “go-kit”:** Have a bag packed at all times in the event you need to leave your home. Use a back pack or drawstring bag which can be hung from a wheelchair, scooter or other assistive device. Include an emergency health information card, instructions on personal assistance needs and how best to provide them, copy of emergency documents, essential medications/copies of prescriptions, flashlight, signaling device (whistle, beeper, bell, etc.), heavy gloves to use while wheeling, and a small battery-operated radio and extra batteries. Plan for enough supplies (medication syringes, ostomy, respiratory, catheter, padding, etc.) to last three to seven days. Store a lightweight manual wheelchair, if available. Organizations such as the Multiple Sclerosis Society, Arthritis Foundation, United Cerebral Palsy Association, etc., may be able to assist you in gathering extra low cost or no cost emergency supplies or medications.

**Medications:** If possible, keep an extra supply of prescriptions and medications or other medical supplies used by yourself and your family. Be sure to rotate the supply on a regular basis. Store your medications in one location in their original containers, and out of the reach of children.

**Medical Records:** It is always a good idea to maintain an up-to-date copy of health, medical, and dental records for yourself and your family. Have extra copies of your prescriptions and keep a list of all medications used; name of medication, dose, frequency, and the name of the doctor prescribing it. Keep a copy in your “go-kit” so you’ll be prepared if you must leave your home. It is also wise for each member of the family to be current on all necessary immunizations.

**Medical Supplies:** If you use medical supplies such as bandages, ostomy bags, or syringes, have an extra three to seven day supply available.

**Intravenous (IV) & Feeding Tube Equipment:** Know if your infusion pump has battery back-up, and how long it would last in an emergency. Be knowledgeable about manual infusion techniques in case of

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a power outage. Have written operating instructions attached to all equipment.

**Oxygen and Breathing Equipment:** If you use oxygen, have an emergency supply available, if possible. Check with your medical supply company for proper storing instructions. If you use breathing equipment, have a three to seven day supply of tubing, solutions, etc. Be aware of oxygen safety; avoid areas where gas leaks or open flames may be present.

**Electrically Powered Medical Equipment:** For all medical equipment requiring electrical power such as beds, breathing equipment, infusion pumps, etc., check with your medical supply company and get information on alternative power sources, including manual operations, that will provide you with support for three to seven days. Determine which facilities/providers would serve you in the event that your home system becomes inoperable or your provider is unable to provide you service. Register with your local utility company(s) if this service is available in your community. Many utility companies maintain a list and map of your location in the event of an emergency. Contact the customer service department for additional information. Many power utility companies keep a list of names of people dependent on powered life support systems and tag their meters. Registering for this service may also qualify you for a discount rate. Never count on your power being quickly restored.

## Banking

**Cash:** Prepare for possible disruption of electrical power. Have some extra cash on hand in case computer-controlled electronic transactions involving ATM cards, credit cards, and the like cannot be processed. You should have already purchased your emergency supplies before the arrival of Y2K. The amount of cash you keep on hand should be based on your family's needs. Keep in mind that keeping large amounts of cash in the home could make you vulnerable to theft. Please use discretion and common sense when deciding this. Keep cash in a safe place and withdraw money from your bank in small amounts.

**Credit and Debit Cards:** Be prepared to pay in cash or by check while retailers who are not Y2K compli-

ant work out problems. Be sure to save receipts.

**Finance:** Maintain a paper record of all holdings, loan balances, and transactions.

## Communications

Telephone lines may still work if power is off or sporadic during short periods. There is a possibility portable telephones will not work without electricity. Make sure you have at least one non-portable telephone in the house for emergency situations. If you rely on TDD, check with your provider for availability of emergency back-up systems. Cellular telephone systems may be operational without electricity. Make the inability to use a telephone part of your family's emergency preparedness plan. Use your "buddy system". Know who can quickly and easily get to your home to assist you if other means of communication are unavailable.

People who have difficulty communicating should have important information written out.

Include special care instructions such as feeding, toileting, movement assistance, and other items as appropriate. Give copies to your care-givers, "buddies", family, and keep one in your "go-kit".

## Transportation

Try to maintain your car's gas tank at least half full during the weeks prior to Y2K. This will keep you from possible long lines at the gas stations on December 31, 1999. Consider alternate transportation such as public transportation in case Y2K causes disruptions in delivery of gasoline. Storing gasoline at home is not recommended since it can be extremely hazardous.

## Portable Generators

Discuss with your vendor the best alternative power supply for any at-home medical equipment. Have enough to support three to seven days without the usual power source. Connect electrical devices directly to a portable generator if you decide to use one. Connecting the generator to your home's electrical system is against the law unless a fail-safe switching mechanism, installed by a licensed electrician, is used. It is important to consult your utility company before connecting a generator to your home's electrical system. Always keep the portable generator in a



well-ventilated area outside the home or in a completely open garage. Do not put a portable generator in your basement.

## Legal

Keep copies of all important documents such as wills, trusts, loans, house deeds, insurance/life policies, tax, health, education, and military service records, birth certificates, passports, credit card and bank account statements on hand in a safe place.

Be sure to designate someone who can make decisions for you if you become unable to make them for yourself.

## Entertainment

Plan activities and have supplies on hand for your family to engage in if there are Y2K-related power disruptions. Playing cards, books, and board games are but a few items that you might want to have available. Stock up on plenty of extra batteries if you use portable radios, CD players, and televisions.

## Preparing Your Home

Check with manufacturers of any essential computer-controlled electric and computerized equipment in your home to ensure they are Y2K compliant. This includes fire and security alarm systems, programmable thermostats, appliances, garage door openers, and electronic/ computerized equipment such as locks in which an “embedded chip” may control its operation. Winterize your home and any other structure that may provide shelter for your family, neighbors, livestock, or equipment. In the event of heat loss, make sure your water pipes are protected from freezing.

If you have doors, gates, lifts or ramps operated by electricity or computer chip, be sure to have an alternate route planned.

## Children

Children and others who function best with structure and routines can become extremely distressed by disruptions to their daily patterns.

Children are also sensitive to the anxiety they see or sense from their parents or care-givers. When dealing with children during an emergency, be calm and reassuring. Give extra attention and try to keep any established routines such as reading stories or playing

games. Explain what is happening; encourage the child to talk about what he/she is feeling; and be sure to pack some comfort items in their “go-kits”, like a favorite toy or book, and a picture.

## Service Animals/Pets/Livestock

Remember to include your service animals, pets, and livestock in your contingency plans. Be sure to store extra food, water, and other supplies for them also. If they take regular medication, have a full supply on hand. Determine in advance where you will take your pets and/or livestock if it is necessary to move them. Be sure to have leashes/harnesses and pet carriers for each of your pets on hand. Establish agreements with people who will help your animals if you are not home or are unable to help them yourself. Prepare an emergency kit for your service animals/pets. Suggested items may include bowls for water and food, a blanket for bedding, food, plastic bags and paper towels for disposing of feces, antibacterial ointment for minor wounds, and a favorite toy. Ask your veterinarian if there is anything specific you should include.

## Summary

- Prepare a bit at a time each month between now and December, 1999.
- Make a checklist of needed preparedness activities. Go through it before the millennium rollover.
- Work with your community, support organizations, neighborhood, or religious organizations. They can all be part of your extended personal support network.
- Learn more about the Y2K problem and its potential impact on you and your community. Referring to the Internet is an excellent way to stay current of Y2K and its implications.
- **Above all, don't panic - PREPARE!** Get involved in your preparedness planning now!

Everyone should be prepared for the potential impact of Y2K. Encourage your friends, relatives, neighbors and community to prepare accordingly. Your local Office of Emergency Services and your local Red Cross Chapter can help by providing additional information.

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## Conclusion

It is not clear at this time exactly what the effects of Y2K may be. It is prudent to prepare just as you would for any potential emergency such as a flood or earthquake. Government and private industry are working diligently to minimize Y2K problems and their effects. As the year 2000 approaches, federal, state, and local governments, working with private industry, will be better able to determine how much of an impact to expect.

**O E S**  
CALIFORNIA



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## Suggested Y2K Preparedness Web Sites

California Governor's Office of  
Emergency Services

**[www.oes.ca.gov](http://www.oes.ca.gov)**

Federal Emergency Management Agency  
(FEMA)

**[www.fema.gov](http://www.fema.gov)**

California Community Collaborative Groups  
(preparedness for nonprofit service providers)

**[www.PrepareNow.org](http://www.PrepareNow.org)**

The American Red Cross

**[www.redcross.org](http://www.redcross.org)**

United States Senate Special Committee on  
the Year 2000 Technology Problem

**[www.senate.gov/~y2k](http://www.senate.gov/~y2k)**

The President's Council on  
Year 2000 Conversions

**[www.y2k.gov](http://www.y2k.gov)**